2: Stefansson--228-229 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
362, 117

"May 12. Point Hope. A Deserted Snowhouse Village. Saw tracks of two men with a sled getting wood from Point Hope. Camped tonight at a deserted snowhouse village. There are over forty houses, how many more I do not know; part of the village is completely snowed over under the cutbank. All seem to have had skin or gut windows, the window directly [229] above the door, and the door usually facing south, though in some cases north. Every window about twenty by twenty inches. Were in one house, about seven and a half feet high inside, ten feet in diameter, and with a U-shaped bend along walls, facing door about fifteen inches high. This, Tan. says was the support for the bed boards laid across the house. Seal and ptarmigan leavings; food plenty, as sealskins lying around, dogs would eat them if hungry. People evidently came for wood, from Victoria Island. Houses about two months old, or less. (1)"

"1. [Stefansson's comment, p. 452.] The deserted village in question was at Cape Bexley and not Point Hope.

The reference to windows here (and in many other places) is an error. These were holes made in the house wall for convenience in loading sleds at breaking camp. Ice windows are, however, sometimes used both in fall and spring. Ice from ponds or rivers is usually used and the same window is hauled from camp to camp and used over and over. While the weather is very cold these windows are commonly well up in the roof, but towards spring they may be placed lower in the wall to prevent melting."

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

abandoned their huts. Those who had windows of ice in their houses removed them and passed their goods through the gap; and those who had no windows cut large holes in the walls, which they could fill up with a snow-block or two if they wanted to reoccupy the huts. But the Eskimos seldom returned to the same habitations; old houses remained deserted until the spring, when they melted slowly away under the warm rays of the sun. Passing travellers might occupy them for a night, but even they generally preferred to build new houses, which were warmer and more comfortable. Hence one could readily discover all the winter movements of these Eskimos by tracking down the villages they had successively deserted between October and May.

Our migration along the coast resulted in a new settlement of snow-huts a few yards out from the beach. It was too early in the winter to camp far from shore, for a violent gale might break the level ice-field into drifting floes. Even the light gale that sprang up four nights later produced a large tide-crack under two houses that lay more to seaward than the rest. Misfortune ruled that I should be sleeping in one of them. The snow-blocks cracked one after another, with loud reports like pistol-shots, and the walls split from ceiling to floor. Then the water poured up through the tide-crack and flooded the hut nearly to the level of the sleeping-platform. My hostess, stepping down to

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relight the lamp, sank up to her knees in the icy slush; her terrified shriek made us leap from our beds in alarm. Fortunately the water rose no higher during the night, or we might have had difficulty in escaping to the land. As it was we were able to wait until daylight, when we cut a hole through the back wall and transported our belongings to a safer home beyond the reach of the tide.

I marvelled at the time that the roof of the dwelling did not cave in upon our heads. But a snow-hut is remarkably solid once the warmth inside has converted its walls to ice. Soon after this gale I visited the hut in which I was nearly asphyxiated a few weeks before, and the native who accompanied me stood on its highest block without disaster. He mounted cautiously, it is true, for even ice must be fairly thick to withstand a pressure of 150 pounds; and the walls of this hut were still mainly snow, for we had occupied it only one night. But it was a striking test of the solidity of a snow-house, and explained why the entire half of a dwelling may be cut away without disturbing the other half.

There were so many things of interest in our new settlement, so much that was novel and strange to record in my note-books each evening, that the days passed almost unnoticed. The Eskimos themselves knew nothing of days or weeks; they kept no reckoning even of the months, only of the changing seasons as they affected the food supply.